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ABSTRACT

Reading and writing are complementary activities--if not two sides of the same activity--and together they provide a model for instruction in writing and thinking. The classical rhetorical concept of imitation as analysis followed by genesis provides the connection between classical imitation and the recent reading/writing connections proposed for the composition classroom. Students should be exposed to a variety of models to allow them to develop a broader world view, and they must also develop a metacognitive understanding of language and communication which comes via theory in the classroom and analysis (classical imitation) which is then reinforced by original composition. When students understand the interactive relationship of the writer's context, the reader's context, and critical analysis of the text, they will be able to see themselves as writers functioning in the same arena. In this way they become classical imitators of models because they understand their models and generalize from that understanding to their own writing. Teachers must provide a broad range of reading and writing experience in composition courses, undergirding that experience with a metacognitive scaffolding which will allow their students to see themselves as writers through a better understanding of what a writer does. (Fifteen references are attached.) (RS)

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Classical Imitation and Reading/Writing Connections: Analysis and Genesis Enter the Twentieth Century

Bill R. Foster, Jr.

In the process of doing some preliminary research on classical imitation, I came upon the following in Peter Dixon's Rhetoric:

> It seems to have been [Gabriel] Harvey who introduced into English education the Ramist idea (itself only a codification of traditional practice) that rhetorical training should consist of two parts: a process of analysis, or critical reading, followed by genesis, the complementary process of composition. Analysis is concerned with the close examination of texts, the study of the ways in which authors achieve their effects, the recognition of the figures they use. (47)

So Peter Ramus was the crossing point for what I had set out to understand: the connection between classical imitation and the recent reading/writing connections proposed for the composition classroom.

The discovery amused me because of my interest in classical rhetoric as a viable means of approaching writing, but also because of my belief in the value critical reading and analysis

in my writing courses. What's more, the crossing place--analysis and genesis--are just the things I have used with great success in the classroom. And that is the point I wish to come to in this paper: that reading and writing are complementary activities--if not, in fact, two sides of the same activity--and that together they provide a model for instruction in writing and thinking.

The sort of imitation urged by Ramus, and other earlier rhetoricians, is an integral part of language learning and learning in general, and was integral to the early development and spread of rhetorical convention. The true beginnings of rhetoric are uncertain to us since all we have are literary versions of narrative oral tradition, for example Homer's Iliad and Odyssey. Such narratives shed little light on where the great speechmakers got their training or talent for rhetoric, but they do give us evidence of the shape rhetoric took among the ancients. The forms were primarily deliberative and epideictic--speeches to advise and sway, and ceremonial speeches to adorn occasions--and often appeared not in public forums, but within personal conversational settings. Yet these speeches were still extended formal productions. Of course, since what we have are "recorded" oral tradition, it is possible these orations are the imaginative creations of the tellers or at least embellished versions representing later knowledge and experience. Still they must have had some basis in pre-recorded fact and were probably at root imitated forms.

By further imitation, then, the Athenian Greeks, with the gradual development of democracy throughout the sixth, fifth and

fourth centuries B.C., discovered what they considered the best way to present cases before the early Greek courts--forensic rhetoric. Because it was a gradual process, these early users of rhetoric did not work out a specific theory of rhetoric; rather they imitated the most proficient speakers, and by sometimes succeeding, they were able to refine their "art." (Kennedy, 10, 18) Between the time of Solon and Pericles, nearly a century and a half, Greek citizens had many more opportunities to speak in a variety of formal arenas. By "observation, imitation, and experimentation," they had little difficulty in refining their skills as speakers. (18)

In Syracuse, however, the emergence of democracy was more sudden, so the citizenry had less time and fewer opportunities to learn and refine their rhetoric before being thrust before courts and into public debates. This created a need for quick conceptualization of a system of rhetoric and thus created a market for expert teachers in the field and finally handbooks of <u>technè</u> to fill the public's growing need to learn the skills of public discourse. (18) During the fifth century B.C., techniques for effective argumentation and presentation were developed, with Corax and Tisias as their most noted teachers. It is they who are singled out as having "invented" (discovered) rhetoric. Yet their discovery is based primarily on imitation, what they observed in the successful oratory of Greek models, among their own countrymen, and within their own experience.

However, although much copying and formulaic composition of speeches went on, imitation of expert models involved much more than mere copying. Classical imitation worked to understand

critically the model being imitated and expected a sort of assimilation of the model which then gave rise to an original production sharing qualities with the imitated form. This form of imitation, then, became an integral part of the educational triad of classical rhetoric schools: theory, imitation and practice. (Murphy, Rhetoric in the Middle Ages, x) Theory represented the understanding of tropes and figures, as well as the understanding of audience urged by Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. Imitation, primarily in the form of declamatory exercises, approached expert models to determine why they were so successful. This involved critical reading, translation and declamation. Finally, practice gave the students opportunity to use what they had learned from theory and imitation. Through these three activities, then, the "born orator, with natural genius for his art" could actually master the art. (Dixon, 24)

The Sophists probably used imitation more than any of the three rhetorical schools. In fact, they rarely used texts, instead preferring their students listen to the master, analyze and appreciate his style, and then imitate that style, if not verbatim at least in spirit. This is what Phaedrus has set out to do with Lysias' speech when he meets Socrates on the road outside Athens. So Gorgias and Isocrates intended for their own students by teaching a set of "methods, philosophical, moral and political ideas," but primarily their particular style of rhetoric. (Kennedy, 117)

But the Sophists by no means cornered the market on imitation. Aristotle mentions it in his Ars Poetica, and imitation is clearly implied in his close observation,

classification, analysis, and generalization. (Harrold, 10) One would be hard pressed to eliminate any one of these activities from the process of classical imitation. But Cicero and Quintillian are the two rhetoricians whose influence for imitation has endured. Cicero, of course, had the greatest effect on later rhetoric education and practice--the "Ciceronian Inheritance"--with his suggestion of models, including himself, for developing and refining rhetorical style. Wayne Howells calls it "'formulary rhetoric' which is constituted 'of compositions drawn to illustrate rhetorical principles and presented as models for students to imitate.'" (in Murphy, Renaissance Eloquence, 57) Cicero, in Ad Herennium, makes imitation an integral part of his approach to learning rhetoric: "All these faculties [invention, arrangement, style, memory and delivery] we can acquire by three means: Theory, Imitation, and Practice." He seems to imply soon after that imitation is more than a formula for rhetoric; rather it is a "studied method" to learn from models, not to copy models. In the Renaissance, though, the discovery of Cicero's letters by Francesco Petrarco and Caluccio Salutati sent students and scholars on a flurry of imitation--and copying--in and out of the classroom, a fad that culminated in the Ciceronianism of the sixteenth century, a near cult emulation of Cicero as the ultimate model for Latin prose, poetry and oratory. (Henderson in Murphy, Renaissance Rhetoric, 334) Interestingly, Cicero felt much the same way, setting himself up as such a model. In a letter to his son, Marcus, Cicero writes: "even the learned themselves will confess, that by reading my works, they have mended their styles." (Aschon in

Hayden, 23)

Quintillian, however, speaks more directly and at greater length on the value and use of imitation in the learning of rhetoric. In his Institutio Oratorio, and as the most influential teacher in Rome, he does more to codify rhetorical principles than any other writer before him. In his scheme, he divides the study of rhetoric, "by explicit directions," into grammaticus and rhetoricus. "The former describes the system; the latter applies the system in inventio and dispositio." (Murphy, Rhetoric in the Middle Ages, 25-6) Quintillian maintains the separation "by specifying that the grammaticus work almost entirely through imitatio." (26) This grammaticus, according to Quintillian, began in the cradle "since even the nurse's speech will provide a model for his imitation." (23) He believed, then, that under the direction of a rhetorician, the student should read and study models and then practice what has been learned from those models:

> "For eloquence will never attain to its full development or robust health, unless it acquires strength by frequent practice in writing, while such practice without models supplied by reading will be like a ship drifting aimlessly without a steersman." (X. ii. 4)

A caveat was issued, however, that the student should not substitute imitation for inventio:

> The first point, then, that we must realise is that imitation alone is not sufficient, if only for the reason that a sluggish nature is

> only too ready to rest content with the inventions of others. For what would have happened in the days when models were not, if men had decided to do and think of nothing they did not know already? The answer is obvious: nothing would ever have been discovered. (Institutio Oratoria: X.II.4.)

Imitation was a matter of recognizing and analyzing good style and invention in others, while invention of arguments remained a separate issue involving logical mental processes based on the study of "theory." (Murphy, Rhetoric in the Middle Ages, 28) Imitatio had another purpose, however, achieved through declamation (prosopopoeia): it provided a "valuable lesson for future poets and historians, encouraging sympathy, understanding, [and] awareness of other people." (28) In other words, imitation could provide insight into the workings of other authors' minds, emotions and motivations; moreover it could provide some insight into the workings of an audience. This, of course, was consistent with Plato, Aristotle, Cicero and Quintillian's emphasis on knowing one's audience.

Probably the next great advocate of imitation added his influence in the Middle Ages: St. Augustine. With the rise of Christianity, the approach to rhetoric, at least initially, changed dramatically. No longer was invention primary in persuasion; instead revelation of "the Word" became the rhetor's task. Invention thus became a matter of discovering the correct passage or example from Scripture and then the best style--grand, temporate or subdued--in which to present the "discovered text."

Models of appropriate choices for style, then, could be found "in many writings of other ecclesiastical authors who say good things and say them well, that is, as the matter demands, acutely, ornately, or ardently, these three styles may be found. And students may learn them by assiduous reading, or hearing, accompanied by practice." (On Christian Doctrine, IV, xx, 50) This sounds very much like Cicero's "theory, imitation and practice" with Augustine supplying the theory (style). The range of models was limited, however, and did not include classical "pagan" models. Nearly all ecclesiastical writers, in fact, warned against Christians attending schools which taught by imitating Homer and Virgil. (Murphy, Rhetoric in the Middle Ages, 59) Imitation, then, had a different object on which to focus--Scripture--for both style and subject matter. Among Christians, this was the only approved object for imitation. St. Augustine suggests students look to the Scriptures for styles to imitate, insisting on "the homilectic utility of the subject, whether its study follows praecepta or imitatio." (59) In addition, Augustine states more explicitly the process and value of imitation. As Murphy states:

> In another important aspect, the matter of imitatio, Augustine strikes out into new ground. Whereas the traditional Roman curriculum proposes imitation for the beginning student, and a gradual increase in his inventive powers throughout his schooling, Augustine suggests that even mature men may identify the precepts of discourse by

> reading and hearing good examples of discourse. . . . His only divergence from Ciceronian tradition is that he proposes an additional means of learning. In other words, he sees a place for formal preceptive training, and a place as well for a self-training process based upon the examination of models and samples. (62)

Of course, the Roman schools encouraged the study and imitation of models at all ages. What Augustine offered was "an expansion of critical appreciation as a means of learning." (63)

Throughout the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance, imitation found its way into several areas of discourse: literature, letter-writing (dictatem) and preaching. And true to Quintillian's warning about "sluggish nature," the stagnation of verbatim imitation (formulary rhetoric) soon became a problem. Erasmus, who supported imitation of good models, such as Cicero, Pliny, Seneca and Poliziano, warned that while they provided a means toward developing "purity and propriety of style. . . , they are deceived who think imitation alone is sufficient." (Henderson in Murphy, Renaissance Rhetoric, 345) Erasmus understood the need for original thought in discourse, for imitation can never capture the genius of the original and so can be only a hollow mimicry. True art requires original expression from the artist producing it.

While Erasmus was addressing the problem in dictatem, Matthew of Vendome, in his Ars Versificatoria, was saying much the same thing about poetry. He questions the approach of teachers in the

12th century who addressed only the style of the models they presented for imitation. He suggests that study must go deeper into the model and discover the methods students should emulate, not simply relying on vebatim copying: "It is not enough to render word for word in order to achieve a faithful imitation or a true interpretation of a work." (Murphy, Rhetoric of the Middle Ages, 166)

Despite such outspoken opposition, people like Hugh of Bologna and Mario Nizolius were developing handbooks and commonplace books providing sources for the copying Erasmus and Matthew of Vendome decried. Hugh's handbook for dictatem, Rationes dictandi prosaice, provides lengthy sections of models--up to 17 in any one--for imitation in letter-writing, including all parts of the letter, from salutation to closing. The user of Hugh's compendium is offered many "examples," but as Murphy suggests: "Hugh's intention is unmistakenly clear; these are not suggestions for rhetorical invention, but instead models for copying." (Renaissance Rhetoric, 219) The more insidious nature of Hugh's intentions, which are completely removed from Aristotle, Cicero and Quintillian's, are worth noting because rather than providing models for writers to explore and learn from, he is giving models for no other purpose than simple copying. He has excised completely critical analysis from imitation; it has become mimicry.

Mario Nizolius offered little more to the student of rhetoric with his book of commonplaces, Thesaurus Ciceronius (1535). Although commonplace books had been around for some time, they usually took a form similar to the journals required in many

modern composition courses. They were places to record quotations and ideas garnered from reading and were considered a fair source for material to illustrate one's own ideas. According to Dixon, "[Francis] Bacon recommended these compilations, provided they were the product of individual reading, on the grounds that they would assure 'copie [copiousness] of invention' and 'contract judgement to strength' (Advancement of Learning)." (48) Again, what Nizolius was offering was a substitute for analysis, invention and originality. Sir Philip Sidney speaks specifically to this issue and this particular source when he argues for the classical form of imitation, that is "a thorough assimilation of the chosen model":

> Truly I could wish . . . the diligent imitators of Tully and Demosthenes (most worthy to be imitated) did not so much keep Nizolian paperbooks of their figures and phrases, as by attentive translation (as it were) devour the whole, and make them wholly theirs. (50-51)

Sidney believed imitation was integral to all composition but that imitation was a way of refining one's own style and critical sense. Such sources as Hugh and Nizolius worked to deaden any originality and any value which might be gained from imitation.

Imitation, however, in its original form was kept alive by Peter Ramus. Influenced by both Cicero and Quintillian, Ramus had his roots in classical rhetoric, but he had a distinctly sceptical approach to these early thinkers, attacking Aristotle and questioning the classical approach to education. Ramus is

known primarily as a significant force in the weakening of "rhetoric" in the classical education. His contribution stemmed in great part from his division of rhetoric (verba--words) and dialectic (res--things). This relegated rhetoric to a secondary position and reduced it primarily to grammaticus, that is syntax and etymology. Dialectic thus took over the realm of thought, and rhetoric dealt with the representation of those thoughts in words. Ramus viewed rhetorical speech as delectatio, speech which delights, drawing attention to itself. Dialectical speech dealt with logic, was plain, normal speech, and did not attract attention to itself. (Ong, 129) Both of these forms, however, are open to instruction through imitation, but Ramus sees grammaticus as more formulaic, tied too closely to the syntax and etymology that make up grammar. Dialectic, on the contrary, is living dialogue and, therefore, protean and natural (of one's nature).

This dialectic may come to us naturally (natura), but it is formed in school by doctrina (teaching), and matures (throughout one's life) by exercitatio (practice). (Ong, 177) Imitation, according to Ramus, plays a significant role in the "formation" of dialectic speech: "The art of dialectic ought to be developed by imitation and the study of natural dialectic." (Remarks on Aristotle in Ong, 177) This "natural dialectic" is the "innate dialectic which all human beings have at their birth." (177) We can come to understand the workings of dialectic, then, by analyzing and imitating classical models and natural speech. Yet this was not the mere reproduction of classical texts so often occurring in the Renaissance; rather it was a harkening back to

Quintillian's approach to imitation: reading, analysis and composition. It is, in fact, at the heart of the renewed interest in "reading and writing connections" in the composition classroom.

Ramus broke rhetorical training into two activities: analysis (critical reading of models--their method and value) and genesis (production of original compositions based on the discoveries gained from analysis). (Dixon, 47) The distinction between this and what Hugh and Nizolius were proposing is fairly clear. Rather than eliminating thought from the generation of text, Ramus sought what was a central point of humanist education in the sixteenth century, "the assimilation of wisdom and virtue, as well as the literary graces of the chosen models." (23-4) Yet this does not come to us in an unbroken or clear tradition. The place of imitation, in its critical form, was being undercut in the seventeenth century by the "ideal of growth and progress through discovery." (66) Moreover, by the late eighteenth century, it had shrunk to mere copying of classical models. It remained an important part of humanist thinking up to that time, but it was quickly giving way to "empiricism, originalism and historicism." (Weinsheimer, 4) Today, even, the word carries with it a stigma which implies copying or plagiarism. And in that form, it is of little value in the classroom because it does not contribute to the understanding of language and its use. Instead it relies too much on a vague and unreliable assumption of some sort of intellectual absorption.

Although classical imitation is advocated in the twentieth century by various rhetoric theorists and textbook writers (e.g.

Corbett, Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student; and Horner, Rhetoric in the Classical Tradition), the most prevalent incarnation of imitation comes to us as textbooks offering various models to illustrate the rhetorical modes. The only critical components within these imitation sourcebooks, however, are study questions designed to lead students to some understanding of the work. Still, this is but a diluted form of what Ramus and his classical forerunners advocated as a way of developing the students' critical faculties and their abilities to use the language. Our "new-critical" orientation to the text is part of the problem because it causes us to view the text as the only avenue by which we may approach its "truth." Even if we take the position of reader-response theorists and add the reader to the formula, we still have only a limited view of the whole complicated process of text production. Process-centered pedagogy has moved to consider the writer, but this also fails to address the cooperative reality of writer, text and reader inherent in written discourse. Somewhere between Ramus and our classrooms, we have lost a sense of written discourse as an interaction between a writer in a context and a reader in a context, all occurring within the mediating field of the text.

As classical theorists believed, reading and listening, supported by theory and practice, are integral to the development of language proficiency. Learning is a trial and error process through which we define and redefine our worldview, the filter, as it were, by which we make sense of every stimulus and produce a response. (Smith) This "sense," according to most cognition theorists, is tied to language. They believe

thought--reasoning--does not exist independent of language. (Langer; Vygotsky) If this is true, then language development in its broadest definition is essential to clear thinking. The classical rhetoricians believed this also, hence their emphasis on knowledge and critical thought in good rhetoric. It behooves the language instructor, then, to understand the development of language before embarking on any attempt at teaching rhetoric.

The trial and error process of learning also applies to language learning, as well. Language learners hear sounds used by others, and they imitate those sounds. As proficiency and need develop, whole words are imitated, their use corrected by feedback, and their meaning refined, along with the learner's worldview. This process continues--imitation, correction and refinement--until, even before language learners begin formal education, they are generally proficient in the grammar of their native language. Frank Smith suggests that what learners are developing is "redundancy," a stored bank of experiences, patterns, expectations--part of their worldview--by which they bring meaning to language situations and make meaning of those events. (Smith, 72-3) Smith makes an important disinction here, though: "Children do not learn by imitating adults. . . . Instead children use adults as models." (86) In other words, the imitation that occurs in language is closer to classical imitation: an assimilation of theory which is then put into practice in original production. Once children learn sounds, their imitation becomes a generalization, an expansion of redundancy. Later, as the ancients urged, this redundancy is best developed, once formal education has begun, by reading and

writing--imitation and practice.

Though Smith is primarily a reading expert, his concept of redundancy applies also to writing. If redundancy, the store of knowledge we develop about language and the world around us, allows us to make meaning as readers of a text, then does it not also assist us in making meaning when producing the text? If we develop redundancy for reading by exposure to texts, may we not also develop redundancy for writing in the same way? If, as Peterson suggests, "[the] personal matrix at the heart of the reading and writing process implies that reading and writing are connected thinking processes which derive from similar--if not identical--mental structures" (460), then writers can develop redundancy and use it in much the same way. With this in mind, we should expose composition students to a variety of models to allow them the opportunity of developing a broader worldview and store of redundancy. But there is more to it than simple exposure to the texts, this will not generate the "universal context" E.D. Hirsch touts in his Cultural Literacy. Along with exposure to texts, students of language must also develop a metacognitive understanding of language and communication. This comes via two avenues: the least effective, theory (classroom instruction about language rules); and the most effective, analysis (classical imitation). It is then reinforced by practice in original composition.

In order to produce a text, a writer must have at least three things: knowledge about the subject to be addressed, knowledge of the appropriate rules of discourse, and knowledge of the reader for whom the text is intended. It takes all three for the

text to have meaning because writers and readers construct meaning together throughout the text. (Phelps, 14) Each of these realms of knowledge may be developed as redundancy through the reading and analysis of texts produced by other authors, of the author's context and intended audience, as well as of the language he or she uses within the text. Such analyses allow reader/writers to expand their understanding of how an author in a particular context will use language to appeal to a particular audience. In other words, a writing student must learn what it means to be a writer--not a literary critic. This understanding will come not simply through critical analysis of the text but also through analysis of the writer's context and the reader's context. By understanding the ways different author s communicate in differing situations, as well as the kinds of choices authors make based on their assumptions about an audience, the inexperienced writer may learn what it means to be a writer. Such an understanding will allow writers to "imitate" this discovered process within varying writing situations.

Reading has been a part of the writing classroom for years, but its effectiveness as a tool for learning rhetoric has been at best limited. Problems arise because in some courses the reading crowds out the writing, so the students have little opportunity to practice what they are learning about other's use of language. In other courses, the reading is used as simply a way of filling the syllabus, with little effort made to really use texts as a way of developing knowledge of how language may be effectively used. Then, in classes where the reading is discussed, often the text is approached in "new critical" isolation as a

document devoid of writer, context or audience, an isolation opposed to the reality of discourse. As a result, most students gain little from the reading because they fail to see that the writer is creating the writing within a real context which determines much of what is said and to an extent how it is said. They also do not see the writer as a practitioner anticipating what the readers will need in order to make meaning of the ideas expressed in the text. The writer in a way "creates the reader"--for Perleman the "universal reader"--in order to anticipate possible misconceptions within the text. Without understanding these two components, the writing student misses two thirds of the real writing process, "the cooperative enterprise whereby writers and readers construct meanings together, through the dialectical tension between their interactive and independent processes." (Phelps, 14)

Only when students understand this interactive relationship between the three parts of discourse will they be able to see themselves as writers functioning in the same arena, tackling the same problems, using the same techniques, and making the same choices. In this way they become classical imitators of models because they understand their models and generalize from that understanding to their own writing. Keeping this in mind, teachers must provide a broad range of reading and writing experience in composition courses, undergirding that experience with a metacognitive scaffolding which will allow their students to see themselves as writers by better understanding what a writer does. Only then can they see themselves as creators of language and meaning.

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